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THE CAPITAL of THE NATION

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by the

Rt. Rev. James E. Freeman, D. D.
Bishop of Washington

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THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL

Photographed at night by the National Geographic Society

Exhibit
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The Capital of the Nation

By the RT. REV. JAMES E. FREEMAN, D. D.
Bishop of Washington

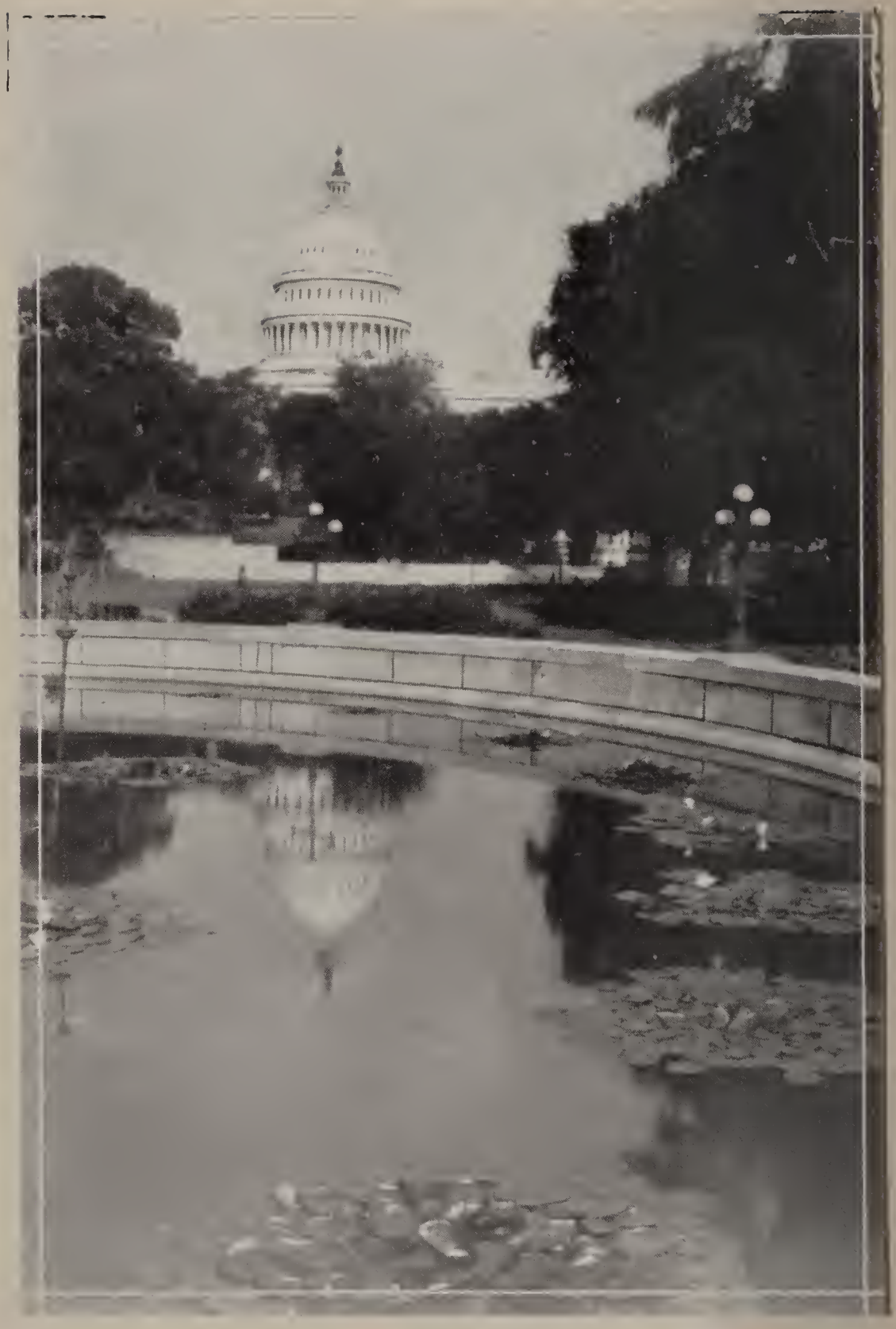
AS LAFAYETTE surveyed from the heights of Arlington the site selected for the capital of the United States of America, he declared that it outrivaled for situation, any great capital of the world. Could the distinguished Frenchman view the site from the same vantage point today, his enthusiasm and admiration would be quickened and intensified. We of America have perhaps given scant heed to the splendors of our capital. Too frequently, we have regarded it as the centre of our political action, without fully sensing its vast significance and importance as one of the mightiest factors in the world's civilization.

When the World War came, Washington assumed a larger place in the affections of our

people than ever before. Since the close of the war, the eyes of the peoples of all nations have been focused upon Washington, as upon no other capital of the world. Quite apart from its significance as the seat of our federal government, it is rapidly coming to be, from an architectural and artistic standpoint, one of the most beautiful cities in the world. The visitor to Washington is greatly impressed as he views its wide avenues with their overarching trees, but he is still more impressed as he notes the dignity and simple beauty of many of its outstanding buildings. The far-famed Capitol brings a thrill to the beholder, the classic Treasury Building, the superb Lincoln Memorial, the soaring Washington shaft, and the unpretentious, but strangely appealing White House register the everdeveloping and advancing growth of our people along artistic lines. Well has this city been called the "Shrine of the Nation," for here may be found as in no other city on this continent, those things that appeal to the imagination, and that satisfy yearning for the beautiful The glory of this city is that it is conceived and developed along the lines of a well-ordered plan.

America still owes a great debt to L'Enfant for the amazing skill with which he laid out on spacious lines her capital city. True, Washington is by no means a finished city. The past twenty-five years have seen a notable advance in its enrichment, and probably more than any other period, witnesses to a clearer understanding of the designs of those who planned it. Probably more consideration and skill are being disclosed today in making this city a thing of beauty than have been witnessed in any other period of its history. A special committee of experts supervises and directs every large plan that has to do with the enrichment of the city.

In all the great capitals of the old world, there have been erected not only monumental buildings for the administration of governmental affairs, but among the more commanding and outstanding of them, a great temple rises to be the conspicuous witness of the spiritual ideals and aspirations of the people. Paris has its Notre Dame, London its sacred Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's, Rome its majestic St.



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THE CAPITOL IN SUMMER

"The far-famed Capitol brings a thrill to the beholder"

Peters, but up to the present time no building has been erected in Washington comparable in architectural splendor to other public buildings, as witness to those spiritual ideals of which we, as a people, boast, and for which we hold a coveted place in the estimation of the nations of the world.

The late Lord Bryce, whose discriminating books on American life hold an incomparable place in our literature, said to a special envoy who came to us during the great war: "You will find America a land of ideals." We are proud to believe that the great ambassador was right. While we have grown amazingly along commercial lines, we have not forgotten that the things that make a people great are its spiritual ideals. We are giving much heed today to institutions that have to do with culture and refinement, such as universities, art galleries and conservatories of music, but are we giving like heed and consideration to those institutions that have to do with the development and enrichment of the things of character? Are we

sacrificing that which witnesses to our highest ideals, to our so-called practical conceptions of life? Are we following the best conceptions,—conceptions upon which our fathers builded this nation, when we create with splendor and magnificence vast governmental buildings and noble structures that witness to art and literature, and ignore or treat with indifference those buildings that stand for inspiration and our devotion to Him whom we believe to be the source and sustainer of our life as a people? However men may regard or interpret their religious beliefs, they still feel the thrill and inspiration of those great temples or shrines that have become the centres of a nation's devotion and the witnesses of its loftiest aspirations.

Conceived on the finest lines by the greatest of modern architects, there is being erected on Mount Saint Alban, the most commanding site in Washington, such a house of prayer and praise. When completed it will be the finest building of its kind on this western continent, and in beauty of design one of the noblest in

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THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL

"Washington is rapidly coming to be one of the most beautiful cities in the world"

the world. Already, the apse of this great Cathedral has been completed, and while constituting only a fragment of the whole building, it witnesses in itself a splendor of architecture, and is the object of admiration of the countless thousands who visit it year by year. Beneath this apse stands the completed Bethlehem Chapel, wherein services are said daily. Notwithstanding the limitation of its space, this little Chapel has witnessed more notable gatherings during recent years, than any Church in the city. Already, it is being regarded as the logical place for those services that express in large terms our obligations and devotions as a great people.

The foundations of the entire Cathedral have been completed and at the present time the noble choir is in process of construction. It has been said by the contractors, who have the work in hand, that the entire building can be completed within a period of five years. To do this will require the raising of a fund of approximately ten million dollars. The property, whereon this Cathedral, with its schools and other build-

ings—already erected—stand, comprises sixty-five acres, the largest property of its kind used for such purposes in the world. When the Cathedral is finished, it will be the most outstanding and conspicuous building in the capital. Its great towers will rise hundreds of feet above the levels of the city itself.

In an age that is so utterly materialistic and utilitarian as ours, there are those who cannot see the wisdom of creating such a splendid fabric for the sole purpose of satisfying the artistic and the devotional, or for the occasional uses to which it may be put for public services. These same critics might, with possibly more forceful argument, inveigh against the erection of a noble memorial to Lincoln, or the building of a mighty shaft to the memory of Washington. If they persisted in their argument, they might maintain that great art galleries, visited by comparatively few, or costly structures infrequently visited and used by great patriotic societies, are both unnecessary and out of consonance with our very practical views of life. This world

would be shorn of its adornments, if these so-called practical folk had their way.

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We believe it can be successfully maintained that the erection of a great Protestant Cathedral in Washington is related immediately and vitally to the largest and most intimate concerns of our life as a people. Men are still susceptible to that which expresses the noblest ideals of life, and there is nothing that so completely appeals to their imagination as a mighty building whose every line suggests prayer and devotion. As a state cannot exist without well-ordered government, and as well-ordered government implies fit centres for its administration, so religion demands not only well conceived and dignified forms for its expression, but fit and noble buildings in which to give this expression its noblest and finest setting. This is more largely true of Washington than of any city in the nation. To the capital we may reasonably look for that which witnesses to the highest and noblest expression of our spiritual ideals.

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WASHINGTON MONUMENT

"The Soaring Washington Shaft" in Spring Time

This Cathedral should ultimately come to be the logical centre for those pronouncements that express our highest obligations not only to our own people, but to the nations of the world. No other building in Washington could be compared with it for spaciousness and dignity, and all that suggests the finest and truest in our life as a people. From its pulpit should be heard the greatest prophets, clerical and lay, that the world recognizes and honors. Within its walls should assemble from time to time bodies that have to do with the most momentous issues, national and international. It should stand as the finest expression not only of our Christian faith, but of our spirit of democracy and universal brotherhood.

Ultimately, it should become the place of sepulture for our great and honored dead. No building in England is more tenderly cherished than Westminster Abbey—not alone because it is a building of rare artistic beauty, but because it is hallowed by memories of associations that have become sacred to the people of Great Britain. The great Washington Cathedral is designed for like purposes, and certainly there is

no building in America more properly placed for memorials to our worthily distinguished men and women than this great Cathedral.

Apart from this, we believe it will be witness in itself to all that is implied in the term, "Americanism." Much has been said during these recent years concerning the importance of emphasizing the unity and solidarity of our national life. More and more we are coming to realize our national consciousness. No building on this continent so completely expresses this national consciousness, as the capitol itself, but the capitol, great and significant as it is, is but the expression of our material wealth and power; the house in which we enact laws for our federal government. Supremely important as this is, we submit that it is not sufficient in itself. We have grown great as a people, and in an incredibly short space of time we have come to rank as one of the foremost powers in the world. With our increase of wealth and influence, there has come a corresponding increase in our responsibility to

the sisterhood of nations. Surely, in our capital city, there should be that which should be witness to our unfailing confidence in Him in whose hands are the issues of life.

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Americanism connotes more than money power or man power. It interprets to our consciousness all that is implied in a living faith in a living God. The Washington Cathedral is to be the greatest expression of this faith, the finest and truest interpreter of Americanism at its best.

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